

# THE PUBLIC RELATIONS JOURNAL



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## **INTERPRETING INDUSTRY TO EMPLOYEES**

By J. HANDLY WRIGHT

## **REPORT OF BOARD MEETING**

By RICHARD B. HALL

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## THE PUBLIC RELATIONS JOURNAL

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# PR JOURNAL

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MAY, 1949

## Interpreting Industry to Employees

By J. HANDLY WRIGHT

Assistant to the President, Monsanto Chemical Co., St. Louis

WITH ALL WE KNOW about reaching people and interpreting ourselves to our employees through the conventional means of plant publications, bulletin boards, employee handbooks, etc., etc., it is strange that we have paid so little attention to the most important one of all—that is precept and example.

As practitioners in the field of public relations, we are all intimately aware of the basic truth that our actions are more important than our words in creating an impression. But we so often think of reaching our employees through words more than through deeds. We think in terms of communications like letters, or bulletins or plant publications, or even the spoken word, and I think we should begin to think more actively in terms of deeds.

For more than 10 years — since 1935, in fact — the principal action we have had to think of in connection with our employees is the matter of increasing the wage or salary and how much. During this period of expanding economy, therefore, wages for all manufacturing industry have gone up on a national basis from 55 cents to \$1.40, or nearly 150 per cent, and unions have been inclined to greet any new suggestion of employee benefit with the statement "put it in the pay envelope." As a result, we have neglected to expand our whole employee relations program along with our wages.

But now what has happened? We've reached the bottom of the barrel as far as money is concerned. The pipelines are filling up with the products of our plants, and the economy squeeze is on. The big hourly increases of the past 13 or 14 years are just not any longer in sight. We had to reach an end sometime, and we are about there now.

The unions know this, too, and we are apt to see a change in their strategy this year. The emphasis now is tending to

"INTERPRETING INDUSTRY TO EMPLOYEES" is from a talk given by Mr. Wright before the first interorganization "get acquainted" meeting of the various public relations groups in Chicago in March. The meeting was arranged by the Chicago Chapter of PRSA and was attended by more than 200 Chicago public relations people.

ward the so-called fringe issues of the past, such as pensions, sick leave and other forms of security.

### Examples

Two union pronouncements made on the same day recently point up this fact. On January 16 the United Automobile Workers issued its basic economic demands for 1949. In addition to a wage increase, they included a pension of \$100 a month and a comprehensive social security program embracing health, hospitalization, medical, surgical, disability and life insurance programs. And this despite the fact that some of the UAW's biggest locals only a year previously had refused to consider the automobile manufacturers' offer to discuss pensions. Walter P. Reuther, president of the UAW, said in a letter to his locals: "We are taking pensions and social security plans out of the category of fringe demands and putting them at the top of the agenda." Reuther served notice that he was not fooling by levying an assessment of one dollar a member on all UAW members to finance his fight.

The second pronouncement was from the AFL which revealed its program for obtaining more liberal social security benefits. While the AFL program was aimed largely at Federal legislation, the object was the same — more pensions for more people and more social security through taxing the employer.

There is no doubt about it that unions know the cents-per-hour increases are going to be slim in the near future and are turning to security guarantees in lieu of wages.

This new development in union thinking in reality offers us an opportunity. It really offers us the best chance we have ever had to interpret industry to our employes without a direct dollar sign on it. Of course, it will cost money.

No doubt of that, but it does give us a new standard to be judged by instead of just how much money we pay out in hourly rates.

Pensions are certainly no novelty in labor-management relations. Few large and progressive companies are without them. Forty-seven per cent of the hourly employes in American manufacturing industry are already covered by some form of employer endowed pension plan, but it is doubtful if very many of the employes either understand or appreciate the pension plan, and it is almost a dead certainty that not one per cent of them understands the economics involved.

### Pension Plan Is . . .

For instance, one of the chief employee complaints about the pension plans of nearly all companies is that the pension doesn't become effective until age 65 and that the employee isn't included as a member of the pension plan until he reaches age 30. Now there is a reason for that which is apparent to anyone who studies the question. Any pension plan is merely an actuarially based insurance endowment. The actuaries tell us the life expectancy of a man at age 65 is about 14 years. You want your plan to pay a fixed percentage of the employee's income, say 50 per cent, after retirement and you will, on the average, have to continue this payment for 14 years. To make this possible, it is necessary to contribute so much on an average into the fund. To keep these contributions from becoming too onerous, they are spread over 35 years, or from ages 30 to 65. If a man retires before 65 he will either get less money per month on his pension plan or the fund will have to contemplate payments for more than 14 years, and that means more will have to be paid into the fund. Of course, we can understand it, but

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you try to explain that to a union committee, and see how far you will get.

There is a real challenge to management to sell the pension plan to its employes and to see that the company is well regarded rather than misunderstood and disliked for its contributions. Now, the average employe merely thinks it is the stinginess of the company that keeps him from getting a more liberal pension.

Let's make no mistake about one thing. The public doesn't understand this pension question either. And public-relations-wise, we must recognize that the public's sympathy is instinctively and instantly on the side of the employe in any pension dispute. You can look for some real public relations headaches in the next year or two if your labor contract negotiations begin to hinge around a pension squabble, because the public's sympathy will be against you on that question. Public opinion was, by and large, with Mr. Lewis when he wrung the actuarially unsound pension concession of \$100 a month from the coal operators. Most people I talked to took the position that the miners were entitled to a pension and they weren't inclined to argue over the details of the plan.

### What They Want

What are some of the specific things the unions want in the field of pensions? If we know this in advance, it will help us make preparations for the public relations problems that may arise when the question becomes a burning one with our industrial relations departments.

I can give you my impressions based on conversations I have had with our own unions, and what I have been able to pick up in conversations with others, but I must warn you in advance that I hold out no assurance that my impressions are typical. Nevertheless, we have contracts with seventeen different unions in my company and our experience may

offer a cross section of the general picture.

So here are some of the things I have picked up. First, they want a pension plan completely paid for by the employer. Their position is that they will lower their next wage demand by a certain number of cents an hour and the company will match this alleged contribution by the employe with an equal amount to buy a jointly financed pension program. Notice they don't want it deducted from the pay envelope.

Secondly, they want the program vested and funded so that the money is theirs and the company can't touch it. They want to be able to draw out their contributions plus the company's contributions in case they leave the company's employ.

Third, they are apt to want the plan based on number of years service rather than age limit, like the army and navy pensions, and this is going to be a tough one to answer. The union's point is that if a man comes to work at 17 and works until he is 52, he is just as much entitled to a full pension as the man who starts at 30 and works until he is 65.

### A Tough One

Fourth, they want the plan to be operative in full the moment they retire, regardless of how many years service they have. Thus, if you put in a new pension plan, they are unwilling to recognize the fact that the plan really has to have 35 years of experience before it will operate at the maximum for everybody. If they are 64 years and 11 months old when your plan becomes operative and they retire a month later, they don't realize that they have really had only one month's experience under the plan. They want it retroactive, in other words, to the full term of their employment. This is going to be another tough one to

convince the public on, too, because of the human element involved. The unions will simply say, "See, old Joe is 65 years old — been with the company 30 years. Know what the company gives him as pension? \$5 a month. Or less." That's a tough one all right.

And, of course, probably most important of all, they want the payments under the pension plan to be pretty close to what they were receiving at time of retirement. Many pension plans promise a fixed per cent of AVERAGE earnings over a 30 or 35 year period. The employee forgets the word average and thinks he is going to continue to receive 50 per cent or more of his last pay. Thus, if he is getting \$200 a month at retirement, he thinks he is going to get \$100 pension. Most plans are based on the average, and more ought to be based on the last five years of employment, which usually is the highest earning period of the employee's life.

### Public Issue

Well, I've talked enough, I'm sure, to show you that the picture is a complicated one. As public relations men, we can't shrug it off as a headache of the industrial relations department. It's too emotional an issue and the unions know they can count on the sympathy of the public in this question. It's bound to become a public issue, and that's where you come in.

Now I mentioned that precept and example is the best way for any industry to interpret itself to its employees. There is a wide opportunity in this field and pensions are only one way in which we can become known for our actions and example rather than for our words alone.

Our whole industrial relations program; our entire policy of dealing with our employees, offers us a chance to put our best foot forward. We can even do

the right thing in the wrong way and get blame rather than credit for being generous. I recall a conversation with a plant manager one time who wanted my advice on whether he should say yes to the union's request that the company contribute to a fund which the union was raising to have a picnic for the employees. I asked if the plant management was invited to the picnic and was told that invitations had been received. I pointed out that the plant management could hardly go to the picnic unless they felt they had done their part in making it possible. The plant manager agreed that this was proper, and then floored me with these words: "I'll call them in tomorrow and give them the check," he said, "but I'm going to tell them that this had better be the last time they ever come to me for money since I'm through and this is all they are going to get."

### Actions Important

In this case I was finally able to convince the plant manager that his big decision was whether he was to give anything or not. If the decision was to give at all, then it should be done graciously and generously, so as to get the full credit for the action.

I could mention many other cases if time did not prevent to show the opportunities open to all of us to interpret our companies to our employees through actions rather than words. They say that necessity is the mother of invention. Since we are now entering an era where wage increases alone can no longer serve as an entire industrial relations program, maybe we will be forced to give more thought and time to other means of winning the respect and loyalty of our workers. In that case, the result will be all to the good.

There is certainly nothing mysterious or difficult about getting ourselves across to our employees. Any intelligent

and sincere program of good industrial relations which contemplates treating our employes fairly will do the trick.

After all, the best rule for interpreting ourselves to our employes was written over 2,000 years ago by the apostle

Matthew when he said, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." That's the Golden Rule, and it's still the best rule ever written for employe relations.

## *Welcome to New Members*

At a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Public Relations Society of America, Inc., held on April 5, 1949 at Edgewater Park, Mississippi, the following individuals were unanimously elected to membership in the Society, following the required posting of their applications:

### ELECTED TO ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP

**Barber, Philip W.**—Partner, Robbins and Barber, New York City.

**Mack, John P.**—Vice President and Assistant Treasurer, American City Bureau, Chicago, Ill.

**Nelson, Hale**—Vice President, Illinois Bell Telephone Company, Chicago, Ill.

### ELECTED TO ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

**Cring, M. Ritchey**—Assistant to President, Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad Co., St. Louis, Mo.

**Dauer, Ernst A.**—Director of Consumer Credit Studies, Household Finance Corporation, Chicago, Ill.

**Forrestal, Dan J., Jr.**—Assistant Director, Industrial and Public Relations Department, Monsanto Chemical Company, St. Louis, Mo.

**Hardy, C. Colburn**—Assistant Director of Public Relations, Merck & Co., Inc., Rahway, N. J.

**McKee, James E., Jr.**—Director, Community Relations, Monsanto Chemical Company, St. Louis, Mo.



# YOUR BOARD ACTS

## A REPORT OF THE EDGEWATER PARK MEETING

By RICHARD B. HALL

Secretary, Public Relations Society of America, Inc.

**T**WENTY-FIVE officers and directors, supported by a sizable group of interested members, traveled to Edgewater Park, Mississippi, at no expense to the Society, to attend the quarterly meeting of the Board of Directors held on April 3, 4 and 5. It was a spirited, realistic session, combining the considered reports of officers and committees with free and candid expressions and discussion by everyone present. Almost every conceivable challenge to the Society was frankly discussed and specific recommendations recorded or action taken on each.

Included were revisions of the By-Laws clarifying the eligibility requirements and processing of applications for membership, and providing for a truly democratic method for the election of directors, particularly assuring chapter representation on the Board by members of their own choosing; definite steps toward development of a practical code of ethics and statement of standards for professional conduct; unanimous approval of a statement of objectives and a program of service to members; activity in research and education; praise for the *Journal* and recently launched News Bulletin, authorization of an Annual Directory, and recommendations for further expansion of needed publications and information bulletins; resolving of the problem of finances; development of the 1949 Annual Meeting.

Chapter problems were given prime consideration, especially the question of mandatory memberships, broadening the

classification of membership, and a real working program between the national headquarters and organized local groups.

This Board meeting really assumed the proportions of a convention devoid of frills and fired with a fervor to do everything necessary to speed the Society on its way. Its record of achievement was made possible by thorough advance preparation, cooperation of all committees, fulfillment of responsibility by every officer and those having special assignments, and the punctual, smoothly forceful manner in which Handy Wright, Chairman of the Board, conducted the proceedings — every session was started promptly on the minute.

The first day's program scheduled an open meeting of the Executive Committee and a get-acquainted reception for all arrivals. The Board sessions of the next two days started early in the morning, were continued through lunch and into the late afternoon.

### A Record of Accomplishment in Five Months of Existence

The Executive Committee, charged with the responsibility of conducting affairs between the Annual Membership Meeting and scheduled or called Board meetings, had met seven times since the Chicago meeting in November. This proved the logic of having a majority of its members in or near New York, although some traveled from as far as St. Louis, Detroit and Washington, D. C. to attend both monthly and special meetings.

Chairman Samuel D. Fuson's report



was the story of how this small group had steered the newly merged entity through most associations' darkest period — the last three months of a year when heavy convention and other expenses deplete the treasury and there is practically no income the first two months of the next until dues begin to come in; the birth pains of building the administrative structure; approval of the president's selection of committees, helping them define their functions, and recommending needed action.

Financing was the first and is a continuing major problem. Action at Chicago required that operational expenses be derived solely from dues. This abolished the source of voluntary income from Sustaining Memberships that had furnished sufficient funds to cover the difference between expenses and the income received from a modest annual dues schedule.

Three budgets were considered — for an existence-in-name-only at \$24,000; a minimum operation at \$33,000; and a limited activity program at \$50,000. The Chicago meeting quite clearly demonstrated \$50 annual dues were necessary to even exist. Accordingly, a poll of the Board was taken. The vote was 33 to 2 for the increase and the \$33,000 budget was adopted.

Annual Meeting arrangements require year round attention. Designated to be held on the Eastern Seaboard in 1949 and with invitations from Washington, D. C. and New York City, the latter was selected; dates December 4, 5 and 6; place, the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. Franklin Waltman's unanimous selection as General Convention Chairman and his gracious acceptance insure its success.

Service to and contact with members was a current committee discussion. A mimeographed alphabetical directory had been issued and this was supplemented by a geographical one. Consid-

eration was given to *Journal* improvement, enlargement and some defrayment of cost through advertising. The need for more frequent and informal contact with the membership was met by authorizing the *News Bulletin* for frequent issue.

### Chapters

Chapter problems were continually presented, always given sympathetic consideration. Officers visited perplexed areas whenever a volunteer was available. The opportunities and responsibilities of the national body in the organization of new chapters, and problems of membership and dues had been thoroughly explored by President Broughton and presented to the committee for action.

Field work was recognized as a "must" and, because of limited finances, was being handled to the extent possible by organized volunteer effort.

There were many requests that the Society sponsor institutes, forums or seminars. It was decided it could neither impartially nor properly do so at this stage. Each request, however, would be considered on its merits and every effort made to send volunteers able to make appearances at these and other affairs at no cost to the Society.

These examples, plus the much "between the lines" of Fuson's concise report, were a revelation of good stewardship. It was a story of solid accomplishment that unfolded more and more as the agenda was developed.

The resignation of Virgil Rankin, Executive Vice President, was a complete surprise and severe shock. The Committee voiced every highly deserved commendation and expression of best wishes in his new responsibility to assume the directorship of the Division of Public Relations, School of Public Relations, Boston University.

### What Makes It Run

Frederick Bowes' treasurer's report showed that the size of a budget, income, how much is spent and for what, only partially reflects the cost of what actually goes on. The magnitude of the actual operation, the very existence of a young organization, are made possible by the time, energy and personal expenditures a small army devotes in its behalf.

Bowes' report was, in itself, one man's example, revealing countless hours spent in examining the headquarters operation, working with the staff and auditors to set up books and systems and report on needed equipment and efficiency measures for routine functions.

He told of a most frugal operation. There is presently but one substantial source of income — annual dues producing to date some \$30,000. About \$4,000 additional is derived from the *Journal* through individual subscriptions and a small amount of unsolicited advertising.

Practically all of the income is received within the first three months of the year — the 90-day period from the mailing of statements for yearly dues to peak collections.

The major item of expense is the modest salary item for the small headquarters staff consisting of the administrative officer and two secretaries. The balance of total expenses, besides about half the low cost of producing the *Journal*, is divided into the usual list of rent, telephone, printing, postage and supplies.

It is accepted in trade association circles that the minimum amount necessary to sustain any national association operation is \$50,000. The Society's operating as it does, for \$2,750 per month total expense, is indeed a miracle of return per dollar spent.

### Will Take Less Time to Join — Eligibility Requirements Clarified

The Society's membership application form has often been said to be more complicated than anything any government agency ever contributed to man's discouragement and confusion. That accusation can no longer be made, because the Board eagerly approved a streamlined, easy-to-understand form recommended by the Eligibility Committee. Processing will also be speeded, and some of the present apparently unnecessary long wait from the time of filing until posting, publishing and acceptance, reduced.

The Committee's suggestions for shortening and clarifying the definition, without weakening the requirements, for eligibility were also approved.

Independent action taken by the Board in open discussion resulted in reducing the clause pertaining to subversive activities from a prominent to an incidental position. There was also diminished emphasis on educational background and achievements in *belles lettres*.

Many remarks were directed at Marvin Murphy, Chairman of the Eligibility Committee, absent in Europe on business. But all were complimentary and appreciative of his performing a thankless, often criticized job with not merely sincerity but zest. This Committee is charged with administering the eligibility requirements of the By-Laws and ultimately passing upon every application. Mr. Murphy has seen that this has been done impartially, in strict adherence to the By-Law provisions, yet sympathetically to all prospective members. No single application has been arbitrarily refused. A few applicants have withdrawn after having their lack of qualifications pointed out; others have accepted a change in classification from

active to associate; every possible application has been approved.

### The Membership Situation

Some continuous membership turnover is as sure as death and taxes, and it was to be expected the Society would suffer an additional loss inherent in any member or dues increase. The membership situation is certainly very normal and encouraging. A substantial majority of the merged membership have paid their increased 1949 dues in the course of routine billing; eighty-eight have been interested sufficiently to write friendly or reasonable letters of resignation; the remainder have made no response at all.

Thirty-one names, delinquent for a year or more or with no record of payment on the membership records of the two merged organizations, were dropped in accordance with the By-Law requirements.

It was felt, however, that both groups — those who had resigned and those who were "legally" dropped—undoubtedly retained some interest in the Society. Board members volunteered to contact all in their respective areas, and a plan was adopted whereby the Regional Vice President will similarly follow up with those in their regions.

It might also be well to suggest here that every member reading this report encourage anyone he knows who has resigned or intends to drop out to reconsider. Mere identification as a member, plus the tangible values from the *Journal* and *News Bulletin*, listing in the Directory, and special publications and releases, as well as the material exchanged among members, make this one of the most profitable \$50 memberships in the organization field.

An additional observation showed that, despite the fact no concerted effort has been made to increase the mem-

bership, the number of admissions and applications being processed exceeded resignations, while the number of new ones is increasing monthly.

### Educational Committee at Work

Dr. Alfred McClung Lee's report was another revelation of quest and achievements by active working committees. Public relations education, initially recognized as one of the basic objectives of the Society, is already being nurtured by a well organized group of educators, the American College Public Relations Association.

Dr. Lee reported that the most important single project on which his committee is currently engaged is in cooperation with the United States Office of Education. This is an effort to bring together the best experience and thinking on public relations education for the guidance of colleges and universities.

He and another member of his committee represent the Society on a preparation committee representing twenty organizations in the field. This committee is developing a statement of experience and thinking to submit to the Office of Education and a working conference of public relations educators.

The Educational Committee considers its most important areas lie in working with colleges and universities to develop high standards of public relations education, and in assisting chapters of the Society as well as educational institutions to stimulate institutes and short courses.

The committee has been grouped into four regional sub-committees to facilitate its operations. Five members of the Society's Board of Directors, furthermore, are leaders in the field of college and university public relations.

### Research A Popular Subject

The importance of research was spot-

lighted in many of the discussions, including the reports of the Educational and Professional Standards Committees, and a principal item in the drafts of statements of objectives. Evaluation of public attitudes was a common theme of shop talk around the lobby.

Pendleton Dudley, Chairman of the Research Committee, reported his group had given study to the broad field of research, the need for a planned program, and some subjects for immediate undertaking.

Those who attended the Chicago meeting recalled that the brilliant session of that affair was the Research Committee's part of the program, of which Pendleton Dudley's current committee work is a continuation of equal distinction that will lead to a productive long range research program.

Discussion elicited suggestions for special research bulletins; for a monthly feature article in the *Journal*; and establishment of a method of exchange of information among members on their respective research activities, evaluation of methods and available services.

It is assured that research as a tool of public relations will be a major item in the Society's activities.

### Publications

Publications are accepted by all organizations as a major service to members. The *Journal* was lauded for serving as almost the sole medium of contact during the interim period and first few months after the merger. Its improvement, enlargement, and partial if not entire defrayment of cost through advertising and subscriptions has been a lively topic of discussion by the Executive Committee and the working Publications Committee.

Every member receives the *Journal*, a portion of his dues being allotted as a subscription. Outside subscriptions ex-

ceed 600 in number, and come from a representative group of top management, assistants in public relations departments, educators, and a surprising number from foreign countries. Subscription increases are averaging about 30 per month and sales of separate copies from 100-150 monthly.

Dr. Edward Pendray, Chairman, has held several meetings of his Publications Committee and submitted a studied, very inclusive report. Their deliberations considered whether the *Journal* should be the sole medium and include news and personal items necessary to maintain contact with the membership by reporting current activities of the Society, Chapters and members; reports and evaluation of case histories; a personal expression department such as "Letters to the Editor;" in short, be a combination news bulletin, house organ and professional magazine.

Other opinions were that it should be kept formalized, with a high quality content; confined to the working level, primarily for public relations people and not aimed at management; that its format, typography and over-all appearance be improved and enlivened by color, sketches and pictures; that it might be necessary to pay for many desirable articles.

Discussion on this excellent report showed that the need for an informal, timely news medium had already been met by the inauguration of the News Bulletin; that the *Journal* was now being produced at an astoundingly low cost for the quality of the product; and expansion and embellishments must be governed by economic factors.

Solicitation and acceptance of proper advertising was, however, approved.

The Executive Committee asked and received unanimous approval of a plan for the issuance of an Annual Member-

(Please Turn to Page 17)

# Public Relationships and Responsibilities

By RICHARD S. MERIAM

Professor, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University

I HAVE BEEN asked to tell you briefly something about the character of the course in Public Relationships and Responsibilities which is a part of our post war program of instruction at the Harvard Business School. In order to be brief, the subject must be dealt with in rather general terms. Perhaps I should preface my remarks by pointing out that the course deals with cases and problems; it does not consist of a long series of generalizations. In common with the bulk of instruction at the School, we deal with the concrete situations the businessman faces and find generalizations more useful in asking questions than in providing a definite answer to a particular problem.

I think the very great interest which our students have shown in this subject, an interest which far exceeds anything which we ourselves anticipated, comes in very large measure from the fact that we deal with concrete problems rather than with generalizations. The students are very much concerned about the criticisms directed against business. These criticisms come from many sources; in fact many of them come from their friends who frequently inquire why they are planning careers in business instead of in religion, politics, law, or one of the other professions. Our students want realistic answers to their problems, not ammunition for a general ideological debate. The concrete nature of our class

discussions must be emphasized lest the very general character of my remarks at this time leave you with a totally false impression of our purposes.

The first thing that I should like to call to your attention is the wide variety of public responsibilities. There is not one public responsibility, but several. There is not one public, but many. In many instances, the businessman is confronted by responsibilities asserted by pressure groups that are particularly interested in only one of the many responsibilities the businessman faces. It is a characteristic of pressure groups that they do not look at the problem, as a businessman has to look at it, as one of balancing the claims of their particular group against those of others. To them there is no question of choice; they ask merely for an enthusiastic endorsement of their own particular views. Therefore we can draw one fairly sound conclusion: Regardless of how well you meet all your public responsibilities, some groups are going to be extremely dissatisfied with your performance. I believe it is impossible to look forward to a situation where after doing your best you can expect to be greeted with applause from all parts of the hall.

Another factor in public appraisal of business is hindsight. Very often the public, or part of it, judges a particular industry or corporation in the light of subsequent events and forgets that business executives did not have, at the time they made their decisions, all the information now at the disposal of the critics.

Another characteristic of these public responsibilities is that correspondence of authority and responsibility, which

"Public Relationships and Responsibilities" was written specially for the JOURNAL following Professor Meriam's address on the same subject before The New England Gas Association Annual Business Conference in Boston on March 24, 1949.

is of course a key factor in internal organization, is not axiomatic here. We hear a great deal about the responsibilities of business or the responsibilities of an industry — the oil industry or the natural gas industry, for example. Those who assert these responsibilities often overlook the question whether the industry has the power to carry out the responsibilities or could legally acquire the power. Often the responsibilities could only be met by an industry effectively unified for the purpose. The businessman, on the other hand, is well aware of the limitations on the power of any one company which arise from the fact that he lives in a competitive society, in which the Sherman law and the other antitrust acts are foundations of our economic constitution. The fact that some of the asserted responsibilities are illogical or unrealistic does not mean that the businessman can afford to ignore them.

### Plurality of Public Responsibilities

The point I should like to leave with you, therefore, on the general nature of these public responsibilities is that they are plural. There are a great variety of them, usually asserted by different groups. These groups range all the way from those interested in a particular cause such as research in cancer or heart disease to those who believe that the profit motive is essentially selfish and out of harmony with the Christian concept of the brotherhood of man and that business should adopt standards more consistent with our Christian ideals. So it is not a simple factual field that I am talking about; and to the students, although not to you, the discovery of that rather obvious statement is very helpful in clearing the air and permitting them to get down to cases.

The second thing that I should like to call to your attention is that public re-

sponsibilities change with the great changes that are continually taking place in our modern society. Back of all these changes may be the rapid growth of technology; but in any event your public responsibilities are not only plural; they receive different emphasis at different periods of time. In the forefront of the great changes in recent years are the increase in government control over business and its many variations in objective, form, and content. Most of you here in this room can recall the NRA days when there was great enthusiasm for business getting together to set prices, lower hours, increase wages, and raise the level of employment. Although, so far as I know, the gas industry has not had any specific trouble with the Sherman Act, most of you are well aware that the Sherman Act has been increasingly applied under the same party regime that approved the combinations for fixing prices in an earlier day. Similarly, public responsibilities are now playing a more important role in our society as a result of the great growth of Community Chests, as a result of the great growth of organized labor, and as a result of the emergence of a smaller but nonetheless significant force, the stockholders' movement, if I may call it that, which has made annual meetings of corporations much more lively, much less legal formalities, and in some instances has resulted in considerable changes in the attitudes of boards of directors. Still another change of very great importance has been the small business movement. The small businessmen, feeling themselves menaced by the larger units — the great oil companies, the great steel companies, the great tire companies, the great automobile companies — have stressed their claims. Still another fact has been the growth of the cooperative movement, which is of

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especial importance to businesses which deal with the farmers.

### Conflicting Problem

We can clearly see that the problem of meeting the demands of all these groups is not only a plural problem and a changing problem, but it is also a conflicting problem. Reconciling these conflicting claims and keeping on good terms with all these groups is no easy task. One conflict which I should like to mention — there are many other illustrations which would occur to you — is the recent tendency on the part of regulatory bodies to rule that corporate gifts to charity, which an unregulated corporation is allowed by law to deduct from its operating expenses, cannot be so regarded in the case of public utilities. We recently saw an application of that ruling here in Massachusetts.

These conflicting responsibilities we see in a large number of areas. For example, people want more output, but they are not too keen on paying the prices that make the investment attractive. In a period like this, business is very frequently criticized for not expanding its output rapidly enough. The oil industry, as you know, was subject to a barrage of criticism last year because of so-called oil shortages, which in fact did not keep cars off the road or leave homes unheated, and which amounted volumetrically to a very small fraction of the total supply. Ten years ago, however, the situation was different; then business was criticized for having overexpanded. And if we should have a bad depression five years from now, this criticism would be renewed. Business would be criticized because it had built all sorts of factories that later stood idle because the growth of capacity was out of line with consumer purchasing power.

I do not want to take more of your time citing additional illustrations of the conflicting nature of public responsibilities. These conflicts are inherent in public responsibilities, and the businessman consequently is not in a position to be able simultaneously to satisfy all the public requests and demands. Neither does the public help him balance these conflicting claims; it remains a somewhat thankless task left to the businessman's own discretion.

### Appraisal Difficult

Because of the intangibility, uncertainty, and conflicting character of these asserted responsibilities, expenditures for public responsibility purposes are very often at the expense of short-run profits. They are investments in public good will which, over the long pull, may help the profit position of the company; but because of their uncertain and intangible character, it is often impossible to show that a particular advertising campaign, donation to charity, price reduction, or volume expansion will bring about such improved relations with the public at large that the business executive can prove that his particular decision is wise. It remains largely a matter of opinion.

When the businessman undertakes to appraise his public responsibilities, he has of course many tools at his disposal. In our instruction at the Harvard Business School we have the students read the views of economists on various problems, study law cases dealing with patent rights and requisites, with price fixing under the antitrust law, etc. These areas are of major importance, but not at all conclusive.

I should like to spend just a minute or two on the subject of polls. This is not an easy subject because these polls are under something of a cloud as a result of some bad guesses a few months



earlier. Polls cannot be dismissed because they do not provide all the answers. The businessman's task when confronted with public responsibilities problems is so difficult that he must welcome all the help he can get including the imperfect polls. Polls have to be used with caution. In the first place, polls do not measure intensity of feeling. You are asked to reply "Yes" or "No" to a well-constructed question. Whether that "Yes" represents your enthusiastic conviction or whether it merely represents a mild preference is not readily revealed. Moreover, the polls seldom ask questions in the form of choice, such as: "Would you rather have a particular corporation increase wages or give some money to a local hospital?" Incidentally, that is one of the cases we use in our instruction. A corporation in Massachusetts gave very liberally to a local hospital building fund and found very much to its surprise that its employees, whose benefit the corporation had had primarily in mind, were vociferous in their criticism, saying that they would have preferred to have the money in their own pay envelopes.

Furthermore, the polls measure opinion at a particular time. The trends of opinion are very difficult to establish because you do not know whether the changes from "Yes" to "No" are real changeovers or whether some of the people who previously were in the "don't know" category have shifted. You cannot be sure therefore whether there has been a real change of opinion or simply a greater clarification of existing trends. Finally, I must raise the question whether the subject of the poll is one on which public opinion is entitled not only to consideration but to respect. In some cases it may be more important to be right than to be popular. A businessman has to have his own convictions.

I hope I have not overemphasized the balancing and proportioning role the businessman has to play when confronted with these varied, changing, and conflicting responsibilities. If a businessman dealing with these uncertainties is not careful, he can build up a picture in the American mind of the steely-eyed businessman looking over all the needs of the world and carefully balancing one against another — so many dollars for the campaign against cancer, so many dollars for a pipeline expansion — and being on the whole a very cagey, calculating person who is simply moved by pressure and has no inspiration or enthusiasm of his own.

I do not need to tell you that judgment, balance, poise, and calculation are all necessary characteristics of the business executive in this field as in all others. But I do wish to emphasize that in the same way that personal leadership, skill in human relations, enthusiasm for the job, and joy in life are important characteristics of business leadership in ordinary affairs of the corporation, they are important in the field of public responsibilities. The businessman must have his enthusiasms as well as his convictions.

The prospect I see for the businessman therefore is persistent hard work in an endeavor to appraise these responsibilities and to instruct his subordinates whose training and perspective are likely to be somewhat more narrow. It is a real challenge, as we see it, to the intellectual and moral powers of the executive. It calls for steadfastness and willingness to accept adverse criticism even when he has done his best. It calls for courage, fortified by enthusiasm and conviction. The challenge of public responsibilities is the principal reason our students find the subject so interesting.

# NAIVETÉ IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

By HENRY H. URROWS

Public Relations Consultant, New Milford, Conn.

THE SPECIAL PLEADER has been fair game for satire since human argument began to be recorded. In our own day an entire school of threadbare humor has emerged, if not grown up, using public relations as a kind of running gag when other ideas are absent. Such media as *Time*, *Life* and the *New Yorker* feel that the antics of press agency make sharp copy. Unfortunately, matching fun with pomp would be poor defence indeed, and it may be well for public relations to inventory valid criticism as a start on Spring cleaning.

It is possible that objective self-examination can be helpful not only to diminish outside braying but also to focus upon that time-honored American goal of self-improvement. Perhaps we should recognize that public relations' somewhat less than perfect values call for healthy changes in some of our own approaches. Let us look at motes obscuring more than one PR eye.

*Auto-intoxication.* It has been said that the best salesmen have less sales resistance than anybody. As an occupational group public relations men compare not unfavorably with much of the population when scored for intelligence, general knowledge and specific useful information, but too many of us tend to fall into our own traps in awkward, glib fashion. Pride of authorship, to some extent. How? Let's look.

*Pleasing Client rather than His Publics.* Some of the major miscalculations made at the conference table may be our own. Institutional advertisements

appear boldly stating that railroads are entitled to 6% on capital investment, a principle hardly designed to excite purchasers of commutation tickets, the very folk who see the public relations posters in their local stations. Who thinks that an annual report loaded to the bleed edges with crayon portraits of chairman, president and assorted vice-presidents will win recalcitrant stockholders or uncertain employees?

*Belaboring.* What semantic victories will ever be won by chanting the phrase *Free Enterprise* six billion times? Are we making this once-helpful term meaningful by resenting conscientious search into its manifold implications? This calls to memory Mr. Ickes' remark that all the world's problems will not be solved by incessant repetition of *T.V.A. . . T.V.A. . . T.V.A.* Or are we secure in our belief that any word or formula will sound like *Mother* if only heard often enough? Who supposes that the same old parboiled and canned address given at several hundred separate conventions, hollering that the planet is going to perdition because of those politicians in Washington, will help to elect another breed of politician when November rolls around?

*Unimaginative Tactics.* This hurts. When we participate in the great, burning questions of the day with partisan fury, when are we going to remember that letterhead rosters of the famous and indifferent, or waves of oddly similar mail from constituents in one income bracket, or intemperate passion at

public hearings, are all beginning to be familiar devices limited in their effect? Is counsel of this ilk what we are being paid for?

### *Flying High to the Last Round-Up.*

How can we prate about economic education for the general public when, instead of digging in and getting some of this on our own, we give callow credence to voluble opportunists who merely tell us what we'd like to hear?

### **Guilty?**

*How Not to Know Thyself.* When are we going to dilute some of the wildly uncritical claims on behalf of public relations which some of our over-enthusiastic brethren have put forth? How's for dropping the impersonation of Superman, muting the narcissist rumblings and selling short on great expectations for at least a while? It would make some of our results appear less modest with that 8-ball on the shelf.

*Confusing Effort Expended with Work Accomplished.* Some reports to clients not only measure clippings (how did the Babylonians do this?) but take credit for snow-on-the-mountain and the sequence of the seasons. This must be rough on a long-range basis, because when hyperbole follows superlative we can only look forward to let-down with an anticlimactic thud.

*Over-estimating the Power of the Printed Word.* Let us resolve that, next time we encounter a pretty piece of puff about a client's activity, our profession or even ourselves, be it on an inter-office memo, the front page of a national daily or on the pages of the *Congressional Record*, we will take a long look at similar tributes made on behalf of others a century ago and last week. Remember Singapore.

*Self-Exploitation.* This gangrenous practice isn't nearly what it used to be; an awareness of the stature of potent

practitioners nearly anonymous outside the field is growing. Here and there we run across a flagrant instance, but these seem to be becoming happily fewer in occurrence.

*Mistaking Budget Size for What We Buy.* Are we unanimous in supposing that an expensive brochure is going to strike the stockholder so dumb with its beauty that he's going to forget the message in the balance sheet? When are we going to get over the notion that by raising our voice over the telephone, when we read a piece of copy, a corresponding increase in emphasis will be given to the words when they hit type?

*Overlooking Employee Assistance.* When we survey dealer sentiment, how many of us bother to consult the salesmen who represent us in normal dealings with these respondents? How many needless brush-offs did your secretary provide last year? How many employee publications are tested against candid reactions of the shop help?

*Chasing Our Tails.* Some workman-like statements defending high profits and appropriate executive compensation might look mighty funny if quoted by the union briefs pleading for higher wages. This also happens.

*Necks Way Out.* In this regard, how many stretches of polemic in the average well-written speech can be quoted out of context, or are ever scanned with this vulnerability in view?

### **Let's Pull Together**

*Poaching vs. Collaboration.* Are we careful in seeing that public relations activities never usurp, rather than assist, the work of the personnel manager, the advertising director and the publicity bureau? Is it fantastic to think that even the most difficult individuals in these positions can be useful allies in a coordinated program for a common purpose?

**Mesmer Again.** How many projects do we instigate and then leave for another departmental lap to hold the bag on all execution, with our generous indifference to their follow-through and results?

**Weakness for Euphemism.** What is gained by saying that men are being *jurloughed* when the lay-off is obviously without benefit of pay? Since what administration did the government have a monopoly on gobbledygook?

**Our Colleagues.** Public relations men do gossip, and sometimes use names loosely. While it's natural that some of

their conversational topics will be devoted to close interests, they ought restrain some of their opinions about the level of their competition. How important is it that the public relations counsel feels himself such a different breed of bird from his kindred spirit, the public relations director? The good men lack time for unprofessional palaver, but it is refreshing to hear them honestly compliment the work of their equals. In a highly competitive business civilization, professional services are only remotely competitive when they're excellent.

## Your Board Acts

(Continued from Page 10)

ship Directory containing three sections, Alphabetical, Geographical and by Affiliation. It would list only members in good standing as of March 31st of each year and be released the following April 20th. The first edition would be for 1949 and released June 1st.

Other publications were suggested — a monthly bulletin by the Research Committee; a monthly release of an outstanding case history; and other special bulletins, pamphlets or releases as needed and timely.

### Code of Ethics Standards of Professional Practices

Homer Calver, Chairman, demonstrated fulfillment of the unusual responsibilities upon this committee. It had held several meetings and early found that its presumptive field overlapped others — education, eligibility, administrative facilities for creating public understanding. His report was therefore necessarily of an interim nature and of an evolving rather than a definite function.

It had progressed in moving to secure

some accrediting for public relations, similar to advertising; a sub-committee was reviewing existing codes and would soon present a draft of one to be proposed for the Society.

There are three routes to professional status — prescribed college courses; state license after passing examination; election to a professional society on a basis of appropriate regulations, of which the latter seemed the logical one for the Society to pursue at the moment.

The importance of this committee's work and of its efforts in writing a code and developing standards of practice was reaffirmed by the nature of the ensuing discussion. The immediate need for them was urged and assurance given that the code would soon be released, and standards of practice developed.

### Chapter Problems — Dues — Broadening of Admissions — Mandatory Affiliation

Nelson Aldrich, Chairman, presented a very realistic picture of the problems of chapters, especially the formation of new and servicing of older units. His

initial premise was that chapters are desirable because they will augment membership benefits, provide vehicles for accomplishments, expand membership and thereby help finance the National Society.

He presented a workable program for chapter formation and servicing, from the initial groundwork through preliminary and final organization details, including furnishing of model by-laws, suggested committee structure, material on ethics and problems, maintenance of contact and national headquarters servicing by printed material and of essential personal relations by visits from national officers.

Strongly advocated was the establishment of an "itinerary clearing house," so that officials on trips could schedule visits to chapters, to areas considering organizing, and to schools and universities sponsoring public relations education. Equally stressed was the value of encouraging the holding of institutes in unorganized areas, since from them would stem a movement and a nucleus group.

Discussion following this report and, in fact, throughout the meeting, brought out seemingly common chapter problems:

*(1) Shall membership be made mandatory?*

Opinion was divided. Some want to force every member of the national into local chapter affiliation. Others equally oppose this, stating the national could have any number of members in their chapter jurisdiction but they reserved the right to choose who should make up the local group, granting, of course, that to be a chapter in name and fact, it would have to make national membership mandatory as a local prerequisite.

*(2) Broadening of the membership base.*

Again division, with the question, "Is this a trade association or a professional

society?" The need for high standards and proven qualifications was never questioned, but there was equally logical reasoning for some broadening to extend benefits to the hundreds interested or working in some phase of public relations not on the executive level; those in tax-supported institutions, government agencies, the armed forces and other special categories.

This brought up the companion problem of lower dues for these various classes of associate or junior memberships.

*(3) Problems occasioned by the merger.*

These were naturally inevitable and arose where a chapter of one or both of the prior organizations existed; where there was neither, but a Society chapter is now proposed in an area where there are already from one to five publicity, advertising, or public relations groups.

It was evident that many of these perplexities are either temporary or peculiar to a locality; that it is still early to try to settle everything, only five months having elapsed since the interim period ended, and a little more time might solve many of them or at least furnish more for guidance; that chapters intend to retain some "local rights."

It was decided to defer any drastic recommendations or action for the present, but to intensify the study of chapter problems for a further report at the Annual Meeting.

**By-Laws Amendments Assure Direct Chapter Board Representation, Democratic Method of Elections, Special Project Finances**

By-Laws amendments provoked the most spirited session of all following the report and recommendations of the By-Laws Committee presented through its chairman, E. Vernon Roth. The battle raged over methods of nominating and electing officers, and eliminating or

preserving provisions for financing other than dues.

A nominating committee will henceforth submit two names for each nomination; the list of nominees shall be sent to the membership in advance of the Annual Meeting, and election determined by majority vote of those in attendance plus mail ballots of absentees.

The Board (which elects all officers) will be composed of one member from each chapter elected to serve one year; three directors-at-large from any established geographic region to serve three years, except that those elected the first year shall draw lots for one-, two- and three-year terms, and subsequently, therefore, only one director-at-large will be elected annually for a three-year term from each such region; and an additional one from each such region for every one hundred active members or majority over fifty to serve one year.

A motion was offered to "nail down" the resolution passed at Chicago that the operational expense must be derived solely from dues, by substituting a new classification of "Research Sustaining Member" for the existing one of "Sustaining Member." This failed of passage by an overwhelming negative vote.

A fourth classification was then added, "Project Members," to be associations, corporations, other groups or individuals who might contribute to the support of a project authorized by the Board and conducted under the sponsorship of an appropriate committee of the Society, with such memberships ceasing upon the completion or termination of the project to which financial or other support is given.

#### **Statement of Objectives Program of Activities**

This most eagerly awaited topic had been listed late on the agenda for logical development from the background of

the other discussions and as a befitting grand climax.

President Averell Broughton, fulfilling the rightful duties of titular head, had studied the need and composed a list of appropriate objectives and a suggested program of activities for their attainment. These encompassed the fields of usefulness of the Society to those in public relations and to business, and its opportunity to serve for the economic good.

Listed among the Society's primary functions were: to serve as the national organization for and thereby make contact possible among all engaged in organized public relations activities; establish a code of practice and professional standards; report current theory and practice and actual case histories, with its publications, meetings and general activities providing immediate circulation of information and forums for discussion; create a source of knowledge, and sponsor research so as to save American business millions of dollars through well planned professional public relations efforts.

The President's recapitulation of its objectives was: First, professional, through advancement of standards and services; second, economic, by providing a better measure of the worth of public relations services; third, fraternal, to further mutual understanding and provide opportunity for mutual enlightenment and association in a common cause.

He then listed a Program of Specific Projects, detailing eight fundamental activities. These included administrative organization and operation, ethics, research, awards for distinguished achievements, education, membership growth and chapter expansion, publications, meetings.

He concluded with an informal summary and the spontaneous ovation that



followed evidenced appreciation of his intelligent analysis.

Executive Committee Chairman Fuson followed with a statement and program of similar objectives coming from that Committee, in the form of a summary of the many matters considered in its deliberations and suggestions and material made available as worthy of adoption.

A motion was unanimously passed that these two suggested programs and all other material on the subject be referred to the Executive Committee for correlation and immediate release as the Statement of Objectives and Program of Activities of the Public Relations Society of America.

President Broughton and Board Chairman Handly Wright commended the accomplishments of the meeting and expressed appreciation for the participation and attendance which had made them possible.

Howard Chase, in a prophetic closing address, summarized the Society's admirable record to date and evaluated its

future responsibilities and opportunities for service. It could not have been dreamed two years ago, he said, that there would be held in April, 1949, a meeting of minds manifesting such unanimity of principle and purpose and productive of so much valid achievement for public relations. He foresaw that the most inspiring challenge to the Society and its members in years to come would be in the integration of sociological science with technological progress, to the end that human beings might attain peace and personal dignity commensurate with their increasing mastery of their environment. At the close of this meeting, he declared, his faith in the Society's ability to take up the challenge of the future in all its implications was fully reaffirmed.

Board Chairman Handly Wright's final announcement that another meeting of the Board would be held within a few months elicited spontaneous invitations to Canada, Nantucket Island, Washington, D. C., the Griswolds' "Glendenny Farm" in Westport, Connecticut, and Salt Lake City.

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*Progress reports will be sent to the membership as the many interesting and pertinent subjects discussed at the Board Meeting are resolved. These will reach you through the News Bulletin, columns of the Journal, or special mailings.*

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"As we struggle toward the millenium of industrial relations, I think we shall find management awakening to the fundamental nature of human relations which has stupidly been relegated to a position of secondary importance. Then the big boss will major in industrial relations rather than engineering, production, sales, or finance."

—Louis Ruthenberg, President, Servel, Inc.



# ILLUSTRATION AND DESIGN — VALUABLE PUBLIC RELATIONS TOOLS

By DUDLEY L. PARSONS and MURRAY CAMPBELL

Dudley L. Parsons Co., New York City

ONE of the more reliable rules of human communications is that there are times when one picture can be worth several thousand words.

From this stems a second and just as reliable rule: it's hard to beat, for communications effectiveness, an adroit teaming-up of apposite pictures and words. This is especially true when the whole has on over-all design that is both logical and attractive to look at — and is deliberately aimed at pulling the reader into and through the story.

Acceptance of the above facts is almost the first law of the advertising profession. Indeed, it is hard to imagine an important advertiser who would venture to set his "message" before the public without trying to make it *look* as convincing and attractive as it *reads*.

Advertisers go to this trouble even when the verbal part of their message consists of only a few words or a few lines. They face realistically the fact that there's no reason in human nature why anyone should bother to read their message — that is, listen to their sales talk — even if it *does* take "only a few seconds of your valuable time."

Yet — and this is really strange — public relations people sometimes assume that these rules of communication and of human nature do not apply to their printed messages. This assumption

becomes all the more remarkable when the message runs into thousands of words, as in a brochure or an expanded annual report. Or into tens of thousands of words, as in a novel-length "company book."

Thus it is that we sometimes find a corporation spending hundreds of thousands of dollars a year to make its advertising look attractively readable — and little or nothing to get its printed public relations message the same indispensable "break." This procedure hardly makes sense — but there it is.

## Exceptions . . . and Reasons

Of course, many public relations people are aware of the value of an extended message's "look." Some of the ablest illustration, design and production techniques to be seen anywhere can be found in company publications of one sort or another.

Almost any printed material that Standard Oil Company of New Jersey puts out, for instance, has the look of having been designed and produced with the reader very much in mind: a case much in point is Standard's classic *The Lamp*. Another classic of company literature is The Girard Trust Company's recent annual report, with apposite cartoons by Helen Hokinson. A third that might be mentioned is American Woolen Company's recent *50th Annual Report*, the genesis of which will be described later in this article.

In cases like the above, we may be sure of one thing. The public relations man did not make use of the graphic

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arts by accident, or as an afterthought. *He recognized from the start the real value of suitable illustration, design, typography and production in getting his message read, understood, and accepted.*

In a moment we'll examine in detail some of the specific helps the graphic arts can offer. But first let's step aside and see why more public relations men don't make use of them.

The reason is not too hard to find. Like the law, public relations is very much a *verbal* profession. It is in words that a lawyer works up his client's case and presents it to judge and jury. It is in words that public relations counsel formulates his company's "case" — its policies, attitudes, or claims to public understanding and approval. It is these words that he takes to the top executives for revision and/or clearance; it is these words that he passes on to the public.

Consequently, the public relations man's mind is very much on wordage. This is in no way surprising. What is surprising is that a public relations man, whose business is communication, should fall for an instant into the trap no expert advertising man would dream of falling into. This trap, already glanced at above, is the assumption that the audience he's shooting at will be automatically eager or even willing to read and understand his message — and does not have to be persuaded to do so.

### Graphic Arts Aids

It is here that the arts of illustration, design and production can give public relations counsel invaluable help. They can, in fact, help him achieve for his story the only two things *any* story — public relations or otherwise — can hope for:

1. They can make the reader *want to read* his story.

2. They can help make the reader *understand and accept* his story.

Just how do the graphic arts go about making these all-important contributions?

One way we have already mentioned: they make the message *look* inviting. Suppose you have a public relations message of, say, two thousand words. You can, of course, just mimeograph the thing on six or seven sheets of ordinary paper, stapled together in the upper left-hand corner. But how many people who don't *have* to read your two thousand words *will* read them? Probably not many.

That way of presenting your message represents one extreme. It corresponds to calling on an important executive to solicit a big contract, wearing your shabbiest clothes and an indifferent manner.

The other extreme consists of dolling your message up with over-ambitious "art" — inapposite but pretty pictures, gingerbread of one sort or another, and general gaudiness. This is like attending your important conference decked out in a loud suit, toothy smile, and conspicuous jewelry. It does not attract: it repels. And it starts you or your message out with two strikes already, and the third soon to come up.

It is hard to imagine that anyone reading this article would, in presenting his message, go to the extremes mentioned above. Where anyone not expert in the graphic arts *can* make mistakes, however, is in the vast area between those extremes.

Let's face it. The expert putting of ideas into words is in itself a difficult art which takes many years in the learning. It is the rare man indeed who can master that art *and* the arts of illustration and design *and* the intimate knowledge of inks, papers and printing processes that go to make up first-rate pro-

duction. It's simply too much to ask of any one man.

Many public relations men solve this problem by maintaining staff artists, designers and production men of their own. Others take an equally logical step: they call in, when they need them, outside experts in those fields. It is the brave man indeed who tries to do it all alone — whether "it" is a four-page folder, an annual report of two or three dozen pages, or a novel-length company book.

### Making "Art" Work

We come now to the second point of this article. If we accept, as more and more public relations men are coming to do — the value of the skilled artist, designer and production man, we must make sure we get the full value of their services. *It is not enough that they make our message attractive to look at. They must also set the mood, make the story more easily understood, and more forceful.*

It is here that one picture may do the work of many words — provided it is the *right* picture. It is here that a *suitable* drawing or chart may light up at a glance a complicated financial situation or a complex industrial process. It is here that techniques for guiding (or resting) the eye can draw the reader pleasantly on through the story; it is here that the typographer with his expert knowledge of types and their effect on the eye, can be especially useful. It is here that careful choice of color is important. And it is here that amateurs belong strictly out. Amateurs tend, for one thing, to imitate what they have seen elsewhere. And they have a positive gift for over-decorating a story or breaking it up into fragments — thus dissipating the reader's attention instead of focussing it.

In fact, there is really only one best

way to tell certain stories, and there is a growing tendency among public relations men to adopt that way. This is to make the story a team proposition right from the start — the team being composed of *counsel, the writer, graphic artists and production man working together from the beginning.*

The negative advantage of this approach is that it avoids the old trap of confronting the artist and production man with an inviolable manuscript which they may or may not be able to turn into an attractive and convincing final product.

The positive advantage of the approach is that it enlists the creative aid of some mighty able people in shaping and presenting an integrated story. As already noted, advertising people use this approach on even the simplest quarter-page advertisement. How much more advisable it is on a job where the reader's attention must be caught and held for many pages!

### A Case in Point

And now let's examine a case where this more constructive approach was used. American Woolen, one of the world's largest woolen companies, wanted to make its 50th annual report also a history of the industry and of the company up to the present. This job was assigned to our company and our first move was to set a team such as that described above to planning and executing it.

The team had not looked very far into the project before one thing became very apparent. This was that the company and its business was a goldmine of material, both textual and pictorial. The problem would be not to find things to put into the book, but to decide what to keep out. The matter of selection was especially important because the book was to have no more than forty-eight

pages, eleven of which *had* to go in one way or another to the formal report on the company's 1948 activities.

This left exactly thirty-nine pages, counting inside covers, in which to give the reader the following:

1. Some idea of the development of the woolen industry from its beginnings sixty centuries ago.

2. A clear notion of the fifty-year history of the company: its various mergers, its problems with national depressions and changes in market, its contributions to two wars and to the industry in general, and its emergence as an outstanding leader in its field — both in size and quality of product.

3. A working idea of how both woolens and worsteds are made — with the reader understanding the dozens of processes between sheep and final products.

4. A clear notion of what the final products look like, and how they are used by the public.

### Team in Action

The first move of the team was *to learn the story together*. As the writer progressed in his research, he kept the art director informed of everything he found out. This gave the art director the opportunity — and the obligation — to think of suitable illustrations *to help tell rather than merely decorate the story*. The art director, in turn, kept in close touch with the designer and the production man, thus being sure at all times that proposed illustrations would not only be suitable in themselves, but would fit neatly into the flow of the story.

Thanks to that play-by-play cooperation, the team came up with a book that not only did its immediate job, but was requested by numerous banks, financial houses and professors of business and technology as a working example of how well a company can tell its story.

While there is no room here to mention each decision the team made, a brief section-by-section review might be interesting.

The front cover, for instance, showed, in color, a fine reproduction of one of the company's best fabrics. The book's title was set on what looked very much like one of the company's labels, realistically superimposed on the "fabric." The only other element on the front cover was the company's trademark, of just the right size to be noticed but not conspicuous.

The back cover was white, with a repeat of the trademark, and six of the company's most familiar labels, carefully duplicated to look like fabric. The inside of this back cover contained a montage of views of three of the company's twenty-five mills — a woolen, a worsted, and a blanket mill. To avoid monotony, and catch the eye, two of the mills were shown in clear aerial views, and the third by a dramatic night shot. The inside of the front cover was taken up by a handsome but not "pretty" close-up of a herd of sheep ready to be relieved of their wool.

The title page picked up briefly the theme of sheep, and repeated in carefully-chosen color the book's title. The next five pages contained the roster of officers and the president's letter, attractively set forth and broken by sub-heads.

Planning played an especially important part in the next sixteen pages, which undertook to cover the story of wool through the ages, the fifty-year history of American Woolen, and the company's position in the industry today. This section was necessarily largely text, with important assists by expert typography, sub-heads picking up the title-page color, and small but unusually interesting pictures.

The next twenty-one pages were an

almost perfect example of what pictures can really do towards telling a story. On either side of the center spread were reproduced, in four colors and a comfortable amount of white space, swatches of the company's outstanding men's and women's wear fabrics, uniform and automobile fabrics, and blankets and knitting yarns. Needless to say, this was done in a way both to catch and please the eye, and to emphasize the quality of the products.

### The Center Is the Core

The center spread itself received particular attention, for on it fell the job of making clear at a glance the flow of wool from sheep to finished product. This was accomplished by a flow-chart for worsteds on one page and for woolens on the other. The title page color was used, and each page had as background a careful reproduction of the fabric being explained.

The rest of the twenty-one pages devoted to showing how wool becomes cloth consisted of two large action pictures to the page, with captions attractively set in wide margins. Here all shots were *close-ups* — bringing the process close enough to the eye for the individual threads to be seen, but still having enough scope to show pretty much the whole machine in action. Where necessary, arrows were set on the pictures to show which way the material was moving; where a picture was not enough, a simple diagram was added. *General factory-floor views, the curse of many industrial books, were avoided.* The idea was at all times to show the reader how woolens and worsteds are made — not how big the company's factories are.

Incidentally, several professors of technology, in writing for copies of the book to use in teaching, stressed the effectiveness of the above procedure in

making things clear to the reader. One called it the best exposition of such processes as sorting, scouring, carding, combing, top dyeing, drawing, spinning, weaving and so on that he had ever seen. Had either the writer or the artist undertaken to "star" himself in this exposition, instead of working in close cooperation, this complicated section could not have succeeded.

In the remaining pages of the book, the necessary financial tables for the year appeared. Even here, care was taken to make such tables as consolidated balance sheet, statements of income and surplus and so on as easy to read as possible.

### Summing Up

Some time has been spent on describing this particular report because it is a good example of what the public relations man can accomplish by teaming up writing ability with the graphic arts — preferably *during* and not merely *after* the formulation of the message. This kind of cooperation can be found within a company, or by calling in skilled outsiders.

Aside from the added impact a book so conceived can have, and the creative satisfaction the public relations man can have in helping create it, there is one other aspect of the procedure that deserves mention. As every public relations man knows, a large part of his job is often "clearing" what he has written with fellow executives. Those who have genuinely interesting pictures and charts to show along with the text usually find that the process of clearing becomes actually a creative pleasure.

The reason for this is not far to seek. Executives are people, too — and seeing their story really presented makes the same "hit" with them that it does with the reader.

# THE WEATHERVANE

In December, THE WEATHERVANE discussed the advances in public relations methods and techniques which might result from the work of the universities, particularly in their schools or departments of public relations. After that article appeared, the suggestion was made that it would be helpful to people now practicing public relations if men of high authority would outline material for reading in their special fields. One of the academic fields mentioned in the article was that of social psychology. I asked Professor Hadley Cantril of Princeton University to write about books that a busy practitioner might profitably study, and I am deeply grateful to him for the very useful article presented below.

Professor Cantril is Professor of Psychology and Director of the Office of Public Opinion Research at Princeton and the author of some of the most important works on these subjects.

GEORGE DICKSON SKINNER

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## PSYCHOLOGY FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE

By HADLEY CANTRIL

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY is marked off from other social sciences in that its attempt to understand social behavior involves a level of explanation with primary emphasis on the individual. This does not in any way mean that modern social psychology neglects the cultural or social context. It simply means that the social psychologist insists that if an interpretation of why people act the way they do in social life is to be regarded as adequate and valid it must be consistent with what we know about individual behavior and motivation.

The area of inquiry labelled "social psychology" is still very much in its infancy. The fascination of the field for those who specialize in it is partly due to the fact that most of our knowledge is still to be obtained.

Yet in spite of this state of affairs, a vast literature has already accumulated. For example, at least 53 textbooks in social psychology have been written in the past four decades. In an attempt to indicate how someone in public relations may become partially acquainted with

the problems, the methods of investigation, and the results obtained in social psychology, I shall limit myself to certain broad areas that may be of particular interest to the public relations man. And I shall suggest only a few of the more readily available readings which a busy person might get hold of without too much library leg-work.

### The Need for Perspective

In order to overcome some of the myopia anyone is likely to have because of his own cultural boundaries and norms, it has always made sense to me to recommend that anyone who really wants to understand social behavior should get some perspective on his own particular social situation. Two books may be suggested for this purpose. *Patterns of Culture* by Ruth Benedict (Penguin, 1946) makes interesting reading. It tells how human beings in certain other parts of the world organize their social life to achieve their desires in very different ways from our own. And the two classic studies by the



Lynds, *Middletown* (Harcourt Brace, 1929) and *Middletown in Transition* (Harcourt Brace, 1937) will give almost any American more insight than he now has into his own culture.

### Social Motivation

This is the most crucial, most complicated area in the field of social psychology. Public relations men can perhaps profit most by an understanding of the way in which we acquire our loyalties, our identifications, and of the way these are reflected in our status strivings. A number of examples of current studies can be readily found in a recently published book edited for the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues by Newcomb and Hartley, *Readings in Social Psychology* (Holt, 1947). Sections 2, 3, 7, 8, and 11, dealing with judgment, socialization, group situations, role and status, and social class are particularly pertinent. A more systematic and detailed account can be found in *The Psychology of Ego-Involvements* by Sherif and Cantril (Wiley, 1947). A significant and more highly specialized study, *The Psychology of Social Classes* by Richard Centers (Princeton University Press, 1949) gives an excellent account of the relationship between class identification, occupation, attitudes, and general norms of our culture. If anyone is interested in an insightful analysis of the process of socialization in novel form, he could well read or re-read Theodore Dreiser's *American Tragedy*.

### Psychology of Prejudice

Chapter 12 in the *Readings in Social Psychology* includes six representative studies in this area which will help show some of the reasons why prejudices arise and persist. A recent book by Goldstein, *The Roots of Prejudice Against the Negro* (Boston University

Press, 1947) is a good test tube study of a particular prejudice. The ways in which rumor breeds and spreads from prejudice has recently been treated in Jacobson's excellent book, *The Affairs of Dame Rumor* (Rinehart, 1948) and in the analysis of Allport and Kramer, *The Psychology of Rumor* (Holt, 1947).

### Language

No understanding of social behavior can be attempted without some knowledge of a capacity peculiar to man, that of language and symbol manipulation. Here again some representative studies may be found in Section 4 of the *Readings in Social Psychology*. Those who would like some non-technical and applied discussions of modern semantics will find good reading in Stuart Chase's *The Tyranny of Words* (Harcourt Brace, 1937) and Hayakawa's *Language in Action* (Harcourt Brace, 1941).

### Suggestion

An understanding of the conditions under which people are suggestible lies at the root of all successful propaganda. Before these psychological conditions can be appreciated, one must squarely face some of the consequences of the process of socialization and the acquisition of loyalties mentioned earlier. A knowledge of what people feel insecure about, what they are sure of, what their aspirations, expectancies and frustrations are, provides the key to suggestibility in any concrete situation. Section 5 of the *Readings in Social Psychology* contains a few specific studies in this area. *The Invasion from Mars* (Cantril, Princeton University Press, 1940) which analyzed the panic resulting from Orson Welles' famous broadcast, gives a fairly detailed account of why certain people were suggestible (while others were not) in a concrete situation.



### Personality and Individual Differences

In any culture or in any social group no matter how small, individual differences in capacity, in temperament, are bound to be found. These must obviously be taken into account in any successful action program. There is a tremendous literature in this field. Two recent books, Stagner's *Psychology of Personality* (McGraw Hill, 1948) and Gardner Murphy's *Personality* (Harper, 1948) give good accounts of the literature and delineate what personality differences may be due to the social context and what may be inherent in chromosome activity.

### Critical Situations and Social Change

It is a commonplace these days to point out that our culture, along with that of the rest of the world, is in a state of rapid transition. Much of this is brought about, of course, because of rapid technological developments which are constantly creating new hitches to which men have to adapt, new artifacts to be utilized in carrying out the business of personal and social life. History shows that social organization tends to lag far behind in adapting itself to what would seem to be the rational adjustments needed if men are to adapt themselves peacefully and effectively to the new world constantly being created. A provocative discussion of this is provided in Erich Fromm's *Escape from Freedom* (Farrar and Rinehart, 1941). In the *Psychology of Social Movements* (Cantril, Wiley, 1941) an attempt is made to understand the reasons for the success of various recent, organized social appeals. The *Readings in Social Psychology*, Sections 9, 13, and 15 in-

clude studies on leadership, mass communication, and critical situations. One of the most thoughtful and stimulating books concerning problems of leadership in a democracy and the dilemmas facing those who are planning a world government will be found in Chester Barnard's selected papers recently brought together in book form under the title *Organization and Management* (Harvard University Press, 1948).

\* \* \*

Any reader interested in following through more specifically any topic in one of these general areas will find a number of references indicated in the books mentioned. Among the 53 textbooks that have so far appeared, the revised edition of Steuart H. Britt's *Social Psychology of Modern Life* (Rinehart, 1949) is complete, readable, and well documented. Since Britt has given up academic cloisters for the market place (he is now manager of research and merchandising for McCann-Erickson) he knows how to bring to bear some of the information so far accumulated upon the problems a public relations man is likely to face.

Anyone who would like to keep abreast of research and developments in the area of social psychology through academic publications, might subscribe to the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, published by the American Psychological Association, or to the *Public Opinion Quarterly*, published by the Princeton University Press. In addition to the usual articles, each of these journals has a book review section which might help a busy man spot current publications of potential interest.

## Book Review Section

### THE AFFAIRS OF DAME RUMOR

Reviewed by Herbert M. Baus, Public Relations Counselor, Los Angeles and Chicago.

IF WE HAVE illusions about the intellectual integrity of the human race, they tend to be well shattered by Mr. Jacobson's enormous and well-researched study of rumor. He shows conclusively, and with massive evidence, that men are, even in our "enlightened" century, swayed emotionally by misinformation more compellingly than they are guided by information.

How rumor, scudding before the violent winds of human credulity, inflames and at the same time feeds on the passions of men is described and documented by hundreds of examples and stories.

Mr. Jacobson classifies rumors into four categories, including pipe-dreams, bogies, hate rumors, and wonder rumors. He shows us the rumor at work as a weapon of war, an instrument of political campaigning, a device for financial manipulation, a cudgel of racial prejudice, and a technique of salesmanship. He paints a distressing picture of rumor's effect on men, individually and in the mass.

The rumor on the loose, an unpredictable and uncontrollable force of nature, is portrayed by Mr. Jacobson as one of the compelling arbiters of human affairs.

The public relations man is interested in the rumor as a tool of his profession. To him, rumor is word-of-mouth — a technique for using people as media to

help put over his story, or his cause. The author lists certain professional firms which specialize in "rumor service", and he does not present it as a very pretty business. The procedures for planting rumors, and the ingredients which make a rumor "take", are analysed in the text.

Mr. Jacobson pays this tribute to the power of rumor: "The simple arithmetic of rumormongering is breath-taking. Let a man tell a derogatory tale about a particular product to ten of his friends. Then allow each friend to repeat the rumor to ten of his friends, at the rate of five minutes for a narration. Within twenty-five minutes a million people will have heard the story."

(The speed of sound would appear to be as formidable in public opinion as in aerodynamics!)

Mr. Jacobson gives his reader ample reason to deplore the human characteristics which give rumormongering its power. While the abundance of his material at times seems to be a jungle which obscures the points he tries to make, he has produced a valuable addition to the public relations man's library. The rumor is at best a subject difficult to analyse factually. Mr. Jacobson makes an important try at doing just that, and the abundance of his bibliographical sources is ample evidence that he has spared no effort to base his complex study on exhaustive research. (THE AFFAIRS OF DAME RUMOR, by David J. Jacobson, Rinehart and Company. 492 pp. — \$5.00.)

## CASE HISTORY

• The Borden Company •

# A Sales-Making Plant Opening

A CAREFULLY PLANNED and a well conducted plant opening is a potent builder of good community relations and an excellent sales booster. This is the firm conviction of local management at New Orleans, Louisiana where Borden's newest milk and ice cream plant was formally opened on March 5 to 13.

Having built an impressive plantation-type structure which is one of the most beautiful dairy plants in the entire South, local management faced the important problem of building up Borden prestige, acquainting the public with the plant's operations and quality production efforts — and of selling more products.

To meet this problem, local management decided to stage a formal plant opening. It adapted a model program designed by our Public Relations Department to meet local needs, coordinated local advertising and prepared the plant for the public showing. Groundwork for an extensive publicity and promotion program was laid by a local advertising and public relations agent. The Public Relations Department was called on to assist in putting the program into effect. Feeling that a sure-fire crowd puller was needed, local management arranged to have *Elsie* and *Beauregard* who had just finished a month-long tour of Florida set up their boudoir at the plant. The results of the week-long open house at the plant tell their own story:

A total of 30,000 New Orleanians, representing all of the Company's publics, turned out to inspect the new Bor-

den plant and visit *Elsie* and *Beauregard*. The program was so successful as a sales builder that local management won compliments from everyone — even competitors. At the end of the one-week plant opening program, the local wholesale business increased considerably and further gains were shown in the following week. During this two-week period, the plant had obtained 36 new wholesale accounts averaging 709 units per day. A number of new home delivery customers called the management by phone, complimented Borden's on its new plant and requested that service be started. In addition, a marked increase in consumer demand for Borden products was noted in retail outlets.

A look at the plan of operation for the plant opening project shows how these results were achieved. As the initial step in the program, a series of small teaser ads, followed by large display ads announcing that *Elsie* was coming to town — and to the new Borden plant — appeared in the local press. Colorful store-window posters announced the "Borden Week in New Orleans." Invitations to previews of the new plant were sent to eight different publics, each preview being scheduled for a specific time and date. These publics and the attendance figures were as follows:

**Employees:** The local operation has nearly 200 employees on its payroll. All were invited to bring their families to the plant. The purpose was to encourage employees' pride in their jobs. At the end of a two-hour preview, records

showed that 800 persons went through the plant and visited the famous *Elsie* boudoir.

**Press:** A total of 78 newspaper and radio executives and working members of the press were invited to a special plant preview and a buffet luncheon in the plant's retail store; 66 of those invited attended the event. Talks given at the luncheon, plus the plant tour, served to point up the Company's importance to the community and the care with which Borden products are produced. This paved the way for the excellent publicity "breaks" which followed.

#### And . . .

**Grocers and Wholesalers:** A special open house was held for grocers and wholesalers, with invitations going to 2,200. Actual count showed 1,168 attending. Here the purpose was to show these important customers our standards of quality and service.

**Business Leaders:** Invitations were sent to 816 New Orleans area business men for a special preview; 1,029 attended, those invited bringing business associates. This was part of a program to build up Borden's business prestige.

**Professional Groups:** Of nearly a thousand doctors, nurses, dietitians, dentists and teachers invited to a special plant visit, a total of 860 attended.

**Borden Producers:** A special buffet luncheon was served 75 Borden producers visiting the plant; the milk suppliers were much impressed by the equipment necessary to process their raw product. The event served to explain the price spread to this important farm group.

**Stockholders:** In addition to the invitations sent to the above special publics by local management, 500 letters of invitation went to stockholders in the area over the signature of Theodore G. Montague, President of The Borden

Company. The stockholder attendance was gratifying, with many writing to compliment local management and the Company on the plant's striking architecture and the modern equipment used in processing Borden products.

**General Open House:** During a 13-hour period spread over two days, a total of 25,000 New Orleans residents and farmers from the local milkshed inspected the plant and visited *Elsie*. On the first evening of the open house, the plant was dedicated by the mayor of the city and the ceremonial ribbon was cut by his wife, with the event being broadcast over the 50,000-watt station WWL. The three-hour evening event drew about 10,000 persons. On the last day of the program, nearly 15,000 persons went through the plant in 10 hours. In actuality, many thousands more heard and saw *Elsie* — on television. A special 15-minute telecast was made directly from *Elsie's* boudoir at the plant and several Borden products, including Borden cheeses, were plugged on the show. New Orleans has only one television station, serving 4,000 sets in the area; this gives an idea of the large audience reached by the Saturday evening program.

#### Sales Plan

To get maximum sales results from the plant open house, New Orleans management offered door prizes every night of the week. Each adult visitor filled out a special entry card designed for easy filing. To qualify for a prize, the visitor had to give his name, address and telephone number. After each night's plant showing, cards were sorted out, checked against customer lists, and prospective customer lists were drawn up. These new contacts were followed up as quickly as possible by local wholesale and retail salesmen.

All visitors were routed so that they

would have to see the plant before visiting *Elsie* and *Beauregard*. Much of the success of the plant tour was due to efficient management, clear labeling of equipment and alertness of employees who were at hand to answer visitors' questions. The *Elsie* boudoir was used as a "clinch" to the show.

### Publicity

Excellent press and radio publicity kept interest alive in the "Borden Week in New Orleans." The radio tally showed four special broadcasts on some of the South's most powerful radio stations being devoted to the *Elsie*-plant opening. A special radio program was slanted at the farmers and the general public, too, telling how Borden's helps the farmer and how it goes about producing quality products. The two-day open house was climaxed with the television show.

In addition to this, the "Borden Week" was further publicized by a series of newspaper stories and arranged radio plugs. It was not until the end of the program at the plant that the public was informed that *Elsie* would spend the second week of her stay in New Orleans at the local Sears, Roebuck store, since local management wanted as many persons as possible to inspect the plant and visit *Elsie* on the plant site.

During *Elsie's* one-week stay at the Sears store, she was visited by an average of 5,000 persons per day, or 30,000 for the week. This was about the same as the week's attendance at the plant; and this is especially significant when it is considered that the Sears store is in mid-town New Orleans and the plant about 6 miles from the heart of the city and accessible only by auto.

*Elsie* and *Beauregard*, of course, were not forgotten publicity-wise during this period, especially since they were drawing cards of great value. Highlights of their stay in town included presentation

of keys to the city by a New Orleans commissioner and the son of the mayor; attendance as guests at the birthday party of the mayor's son and a presentation of a new hat by a noted hat designer. The two famous bovines also visited three orphanages, and were greeted by thousands on their trips through the city on a brightly-decorated stake truck. During their second week in New Orleans, they continued to win favorable radio and press comment.

### Marks Growth

The new plant, serving a trading area with a population of 721,000 marks the latest step in Borden's growth in the South, and is a culmination of the company's 92 years of experience in the dairy business. The plant itself is a matter of pride — not only to Borden management, but to the citizens of the city, too. The Southern Colonial architecture is part of the Southern District's program to design business homes which would be objects of civic pride.

The main building is erected on an 18-acre site, with a 395-foot frontage on an important highway. The building is of structural steel and water-proofed concrete blocks, and contains 30,000 square feet of floor space. In addition, two one-story warehouses which are all metal and fire proof, have been constructed. They contain 9,200 square feet of floor space.

Both the ice cream and fluid milk production facilities are housed on the first floor of the main building, while the general and executive offices take up the second floor space. The offices are air conditioned and the plant air cooled. All the air coming into the plant is washed and filtered.

The processing room has terrazzo floors and glazed tile walls. Other features include spacious loading docks;

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# PRESS RELATIONS\*

By WALTER E. SCHNEIDER

Director of Press Relations and Advertising, Institute of Life Insurance, New York

JUST TEN YEARS AGO I wrote for *Editor & Publisher* a two paragraph news item. Because it summed up the press world for me so well and so tersely, I have carried it in my wallet all these years. Here it is:

"A colorful appraisal of the press was written by Henry Luce, publisher of *Time*, in a copy of a recent issue containing his marginal critiques of various departmental stories. Under the Press Department of *Time*, he commented:

"The press is a busy, boisterous, hell-raising, pompous, neurotic thing — out of which some drama should be extracted."

The same might apply, at least in some measure, to all businesses.

Business—any business—has buried within its daily operations some news, some events of human interest, some facts of general public interest. The business wants those facts known. The public wants to know them. There is an opportunity, which is at the same time a responsibility, to get this news of the business to the public.

First, let's define news, our basic product upon which a world of press relations must be built. News is many things to many men, but primarily the measuring rod is the scope of interest inherent in any story. An atom bomb explosion in Hiroshima is news, demanding not only the interest but the attention of every person around the globe — literate or illiterate, old or young. Why? Because it was dramatic

and never had happened before. And, more significantly, because that mushroom in the sky seen in later news pictures was a new kind of sky writing with vast implications to hopes and fears of every nation and every inhabitant thereof.

Now, each of us lives in a world of our own — even city editors. They — and many other types of editors — frequently are maligned as being hard-boiled, two-horned monsters who spout fire and cuss words and relegate the brain children of press agents to a wastebasket hell. That picture, however, is as much a fantasy as Dante's *Inferno*. Those of you who have met, lived or mingled with editors and newspapermen know them to be normal human beings, usually kind and helpful. If they are cynical, that is because they have seen so much of life and literary tripe flow over their desks. With it all, however, they like a good story, a lively story, a newsy story. And there are but few who care whether a story comes from one of his own staff or from a press relations man — or should we use the more euphonious and more definitive term public relations man — provided, of course, that the editor trusts him.

On that last point — trust — often hangs the difference between a story printed and one that goes into the wastebasket. But more often it is the Hiroshima quality of the news presented in the city editor's own little world — or big world if that be the case — that determines whether the story is thrown away or printed. In news relations, as in public relations, every one of us must remember daily that it is the pub-

\*From a talk before Mutual Insurance Advertising and Sales Conference of the American Mutual Alliance, Hotel Statler, Buffalo.



lic interest, not merely our own interest, to which we must cater. All of us must do that if our news stories are to be printed consistently and be regarded highly by editors and public alike, and occasionally find their way to Page One. If one of our news items about an agent or an agency winds up as a one sentence filler on Page 63, rest assured, in most instances, that is exactly where it belonged if it got into print at all. If the combined experience of our newspaper and public relations friends and our own staff has taught us anything, it is simply that news must be interesting. Stories about little people or big people doing little things or big things still rest on that one foundation — news interest. A house of press relations can be built on the news integrity and news stories sent to the press or, if the confidence of the editor in that integrity is shaken, the house can fall like a house of cards.

Very recently a mailing piece with bold red letters crossed my desk. The heading was "*NEWS is something you never knew before.*" That didn't go into the wastebasket because it struck not only my eye, but my newspaperman's heart. It's the Hiroshima news philosophy all over again. So it's now up on the wall of my office where my staff and I can see it every day and remember to apply its lesson to the stories cleared by the Institute. That motto is, in effect, the credo of every editor and newspaper reporter worthy of the name. It is, therefore, up to all of us to act accordingly — in the editor's interest and the public interest as well as in our own interest — if we are to have our own successes, big and little, with the news items we send to the press.

Besides a consistency of quality and a consistency of confidence, there is another very important element in any long-range program of press relations. That element is — if I may be par-

doned the expression — the consistency of consistency. One story never made an indelible and lasting impression on any human mind — not even the atom bomb of Hiroshima. That, of course, became a continuing, repetitive story. The world knows about it now — as it knows about Lindbergh, Coca-Cola or the Marines triumphantly raising our colors on Iwo Jima. Repetition of story or theme is one vital ingredient in either news or advertising practice that hopes to make a lasting impression on mass consciousness.

While I would not go so far as to approve the philosophy of irritating the public to make it conscious of a product, it is nevertheless true that sometimes it is necessary to repeat, repeat, repeat until, at risk of annoying some people, a worth-while story finally sinks into their consciousness. People are too busy in their own little worlds in business or in life to grasp the significance of a one-shot story. But if you make it news and drive it home through repetition, some who missed it the first time will be hit on your second try, third try, or whenever it might catch up with them — from the printed or spoken word, or by visual presentation. Sometimes it takes the drama of a mushroom in the sky to put over a really significant fact.

All this reminds me of a quaint practice down in Florida. It's known as "worming" and it's practiced by the folks who sell bait to visitors to the little fishing village of Blountstown. As Ray Trullinger told it in his "Hooks and Bullets" column in the New York *World Telegram*, some 200 of Blountstown's 300 families make their living from the capture and sale of fish worms. Now the point of Mr. Trullinger's story — and mine — is that the worms aren't dug, but are "grunted" from the earth. That, we are sure, intrigues your inter-

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est as it did mine when I first heard it. It was something I had never heard before, it held a promise of being dramatic, or at least revolutionary in its concept. So much for the philosophy — now here's the story — and I hope it's news to most of you.

This "grunting" business, says Mr. Trullinger, involves driving a hardwood stake about two feet into the ground and then massaging — says he — *massaging* the end of the stake with an old auto spring leaf.

This, Trullinger continues to explain, causes an unpleasant vibration which sets the worms' teeth on edge and has the same effect as the 17th juke-box rendition of "Buttons and Bows" on this reporter. (Mr. Trullinger, that is, not your speaker; and may I add an aside that there are *some* songs Mr. Trullinger and I could hear 17 times without irritation, but "Buttons and Bows" doesn't happen to be one of them.)

So, Mr. Trullinger continues, the worms come to the surface *in a hurry*, just as your agent emerges from a juke joint with precipitous haste when some music lover begins dropping nickels.

There Mr. Trullinger ended his story — but I do think his story of "worming" has a moral with a wallop for all of us in public relations, press relations and advertising. The moral is, as I see it, drive the point home until the worms come to the surface. Whether as a fisherman you want worms, or as a business person you want an audience, drive your point home by constant repetition. This procedure might annoy a fishing columnist, and even the worms at times, but it's all in the game of good fishing or good business practice. Mr. Trullinger did forget to mention how many worms he got — but he implied they all came to the surface. He also implied that they were put to good purpose, feeding the fish who, in turn, fed hun-

gry fishermen and their families, and also helped to support two out of every three people in the Florida village of Blountstown. That's all to the good, even though the worms and Mr. Trullinger and the implied fish were annoyed or sacrificed in the process of having fishing fun and, more seriously, living.

There is perhaps one more vital element in press relations, as I see it, and it is probably of first importance in the breaking of a news story. That element is timing. It is always important in getting an idea across to the public.

The atom bomb at Hiroshima was greater news to a war weary America and a war weary world than it might have been the first week after Pearl Harbor. It was a story of hope to the Allied forces and most of the world but, at the same time, it was an omen of fear of the future in those nations where plans for subjugation of the free-loving people of the world were blasted high by that atomic mushroom at Hiroshima.

The Atomic Age we entered that day still holds hope for us and for many other free nations. Yet it is a thing of fear to us, too, because its power might be misused by those who might not be as beneficent and altruistic and purposeful as the American people.

There are some who fear, too, that the insurance business might misuse its present power for good in our nation's future, and in the lives of our people; but such fears are as groundless as the fears that the American people would permit the atom bomb to be used for evil or for imperialism.

Imperialism is no more inherent in the nature of our nation than it is in the leadership of the life insurance business as it is now constituted. After all, like our own nation, the life insurance business is the people — 78 million of them — plus the families and chil-

dren they protect, through life insurance. The same might be true to some degree about the other forms of insurance which you represent, but that is a point on which others are better qualified to speak.

I would also like to observe that human interest, and the extent of the interests of humans involved in any story placed on an editor's desk, is an irreplaceable quality of news. If it is present in your stories, it is very likely that they will be printed — and printed at greater length than a flat recital of the business mores of Joe Doaks, agent, opening an office or going to a convention.

Search out the human values in your own company operation, present them as news and most editors will not only print your stories, they will like you better for digging out stories they want to print and for saving them work.

The *New York Times* qualifies in most minds as a competent observer on press relations or public relations, among other things. Very recently, the *Times* published an editorial on Defense Secretary Forrestal's consolidation of public information functions for all of the armed service branches. The *Times* observed that, with the previous system of independent Army and Navy press action in Hawaii, it was only because the Army had a better and more energetic press agent than did the Navy and a more lenient censorship that many people among the American public still believe that land-based Army bombers played an important part in the Battle of Midway in June, 1942. "It is an error of fact that is still being perpetuated in magazine articles and books," said the *Times*, in effect, because the Army was wiser in the ways of press relations — or public information, public relations or whatever you may call it. And here, of course, it should be said that press

relations constitute one of the tools of public relations, but are not public relations *per se*. This is true in any business, in insurance, industry or government. A great deal of what the public learns of your service performance depends upon an energetic press staff and, even more, in parallel, upon a more lenient censorship. In any business there should be nothing to hide from the public. Timidity about giving facts for publication is one big barrier that must be hurdled by business leaders in the current marathon race in the press if those business leaders want to finish anywhere up near the front in the eyes of the spectators — the American public. It can be done and is being done every day through good public relations operations and the race is lost only to those who are left winded along the way because the race of business life today requires performance ability from the participants.

Finally, the essence of public relations, as I know it, was summed up by the *New York Times* in an earlier editorial on the arrival in New York of the Gratitude Train sent by the French people.

Said the *Times*: "As one means of breaking down the barrier between the peoples of the many nations, a Friendship Train was organized last year by Drew Pearson and thousands of tons of foodstuffs were sent to Europe, a *beau geste* from us, who have so much, to others who had so little. Today that bread of friendship cast upon the waters has come back to us from the French people in the form of a 49-car trainload of gifts for the American people.

"There is no taint of commercialism about the venture any more than there was about the original Friendship Train," was the way the *Times* summed it up. And, may I make this pertinent observation: the Friendship Train was

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perhaps the greatest spontaneous gesture of any people at any time.

It also happens to be, in my humble opinion one of the most memorable public relations acts of the American people — making friends for us as a nation around the world. In fact, the State Department tells us the Friendship Train was a contributing factor in stopping Communism in its tracks at the polls in France recently. Communism was on the rise in the French Republic until the Friendship Train arrived from America. Echoes and re-echoes of the basic feeling of warm regard and mutual trust between the peoples of these two nations are still reverberating.

We in the life insurance business and in other businesses are learning and applying the lesson of that new, yet old, credo — "Bread cast upon the waters." Everyone benefits as in our own specific branch of press relations and advertising, it is, I believe, all to the good.

Now, in closing, let us get back to press relations for just a moment. We all know that the grass is usually greener in the other fellow's yard. Back in the old newspaper days, we envied those soft berths the publicity men had. You know, the feet-up-on-the-desk sort of

thing. However, viewpoints can change, and we know now that press relations men and women often work harder than many on the newspapers. One reason is that everybody's deadline is our deadline. There are still moments when I envy those in softer jobs on the current "other side of the fence" in newspaper work. However, there are exceptions. I know of one woman editor on a mid-western daily whom we here shall know only as "Nell." Nell, like many people in newspaper and press relations work, was called upon to double in brass — only our Nell of this story sextupled in brass. She was:

1. Editorial Writer
2. Associate Editor
3. Women's Editor
4. Radio Editor
5. Book Critic
6. (But not least) Librarian.

If you are a doubting Thomas and feel we are pulling your collective leg about Nell, I'll take any bets from all comers that it can be proved by an *Editor and Publisher Yearbook* about our poor Nell.

I'm sure you are wondering with me what she did with her spare time.

## A Sales-Making Plant Opening

(Continued from Page 32)

windows of heat-repellent glass; abundant fluorescent lighting; and a refrigeration capacity of 244½ tons. In addition to the production departments, the first floor of the main building provides roomy offices and a large assembly room for milk and ice cream salesmen, as well as a spacious store.

Work is under way now to convert the grounds behind the plant into a landscaped garden. The completion of this work will do much to heighten the excellent reception already given this new Borden plant by the people of New Orleans.

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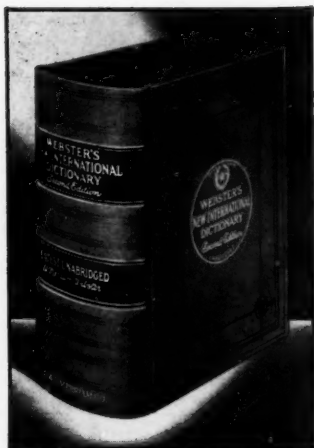
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